

O'BRIEN
Serial No. 10/052,107

- 2 -

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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

(u) Please cancel without prejudice claims 1-3 and amend claims 4, 6 and 8 as follows:

(u) 1-3. (Cancelled)

(u) 4. (Currently Amended) A method [[as claimed in claim 3]] of hardening ATM cells, the ATM cells each including a header and payload, the method including the steps of encoding the header and payload within an individual transmission frame, wherein the header and payload are interleaved within an individual transmission frame, wherein error correction is applied separately to the header and the payload prior to interleaving them within a transmission frame, wherein the error correction corresponds to Reed Solomon forward error correction.

(u) 5. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 4 wherein the Reed Solomon encoding is applied to the header and payload separately following which the encoded header is interleaved with the encoded payload.

(u) 6. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim [[1]] 4 where empty/idle ATM cells are eliminated/used to substantially match input and output rates of an ATM link.

(u) 7. (Cancelled)

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Serial No. 10/052,107

- 3 -

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(~~C~~) 8. (Previously Presented) An apparatus adapted for hardening ATM cells in accordance with the method of claim [[1]] 4.

(u) 9. (Cancelled)

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